

Nathaniel Crosby III House
703 Deschutes Way
Tumwater
Thurston County
Washington

HABS No. WA-162

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Western Region National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94102

NATHANIEL CROSBY III HOUSE

Location: 703 Deachutes Way
Tumwater, Thurston County, Washington

Date of Construction: 1854

Present Owner (Grounds): City of Tumwater
2nd and Bates Streets
Tumwater, Washington 98502

Life Estate Owner (House): Olympia Chapter No. 4
Daughters of the Pioneers of Washington
c/o Mrs. Esther H. Parr, President
405 Newell Road N.E.
Olympia, Washington 98506

Present Use: Historic House Museum and Meeting Hall

Significance: The significance of the Crosby House lies in its association with an early and prominent Tumwater family and its interesting vernacular manifestation of the transition from Greek Revival to Gothic Revival architectural styles.

Its builder, Nathaniel Crosby III, was the son of a merchant sea captain, Nathaniel Crosby Jr., who brought much of his family to Tumwater in 1850. He was a nephew of Clanrick Crosby, owner of a general store and grist, flour, and saw mills along Tumwater Falls on the Deschutes River.

Built in 1854 for his new bride, Cordelia Jane Smith, the house is plank wall construction covered with clapboards. Its most distinguishing exterior features are the steeply pitched roof and ornamental bargeboards.

Historian: Stephen A. Mathison

Nathaniel Crosby III's father first came to the Northwest from Boston in 1844 with a ship full of cargo which he unloaded in the small settlement of Portland, Oregon. Captain Nathaniel Crosby, Jr., spent several years exploring the area, including Budd Inlet, the southern tip of Puget Sound.

In 1849, he purchased a sawmill and grist mill along the falling waters (Tumwater Falls) of the Deschutes River from Michael Simmons. He returned a year later with much of his family including a brother, Clanrick, and his son Nathaniel III. Captain Crosby soon left Tumwater, but his brother opened a general store, built a large flour mill, and also operated the other mills.

After his father's untimely death in Hong Kong, Nathaniel III and his mother returned to Tumwater. There he worked for the family enterprises and in 1854 purchased land from his uncle to build a house for his new bride, Cordelia Jane Smith, daughter of a prosperous farmer on Chambers Prairie, south of Tumwater.

Their two sons, Frank and Harry, were born during the time the family lived in the house. The Crosbys eventually moved to Olympia.

The house changed hands several times before being purchased in 1947 for the Daughters of the Pioneers of Washington. Those who contributed toward the purchase of the house were the Schmidt family, owners of the Olympia Brewery, located a short distance away; Lloyd Crosby; and the family of singer Bing (Harry) Crosby, a great grandson of Nathaniel Crosby III.

The Crosby House is situated on an irregularly shaped parcel of land adjacent to a large public historical park in the city of Tumwater. A cherry tree planted by Nathaniel Crosby still stands in the front yard. The site is on a bluff that once commanded a view of Budd Inlet and the Olympic Mountains. Today, that view is blocked by the builtup roadway of a major freeway complex.

The dimensions of the main section of the house are $24\frac{1}{2}$ feet by $30\frac{1}{2}$ feet. The very steep (16" in 12" pitch) east-west oriented roof provides nearly two full stories. An open shed roof porch extends the width of the house on the east gable end facade. Entry to the house is through a simple Greek Revival doorway with sidelights at the south end of this porch.

A one story $18\frac{1}{2}$ foot wide kitchen and bathroom wing is located at the rear of the house. Its steep roof gable projects out from the west gable end of the main house in the form of a "T." A second Victorian era entry door is found at a small porch on the south side of this wing. A later 12 foot by 12 foot addition to the kitchen extends to the north. On its east side is an open porch with an entry into the kitchen.

Before the Daughters of the Pioneers gained ownership of the house, a large woodshed stood near the rear of the house, but it has been demolished.

The building rests on a post and pier foundation. Interior and exterior walls are constructed of vertical two inch planks. The north kitchen addition is frame construction.

Exterior siding is claboard, though flush siding covers the planking below the roof of the east porch and the smaller south porch. Windows have simple Greek Revival surrounds and shutters. They are placed symmetrically on the north, south and upper east facades. Two dormers project, one each, from the center of the north and south roof slopes. The dormer bargeboards are even more ornate than the gable end bargeboards and gutterless fascia boards. The fanciful roof details and extreme roof slope reflect Gothic Revival elements of the house design.

Inside, the entrance hall has a stairway leading upstairs to four bedrooms. The stair rail is fashioned from the branch of a yew tree that has been polished to a "satin smoothness." The parlor to the right of the hallway

features a fireplace (the marble mantel is from a later period) and handsome wood window casings with panels below. A large sitting room behind the parlor is used by the Daughters of the Pioneers as a meeting space. Double panel sliding doors separate this room from the dining room. The modernized kitchen and bathroom are to the rear.

Most interior walls are covered with wallpaper and backing directly over the planking. Furnishings from the period have been donated. Among them are two chairs given by Bing Crosby that were once owned by his grandparents.

One of the upstairs bedrooms has been covered with plywood paneling and flooring and is used to display memorabilia of the Crosby family, Bing Crosby, and the Schmidts, and to house the Daughters of the Pioneers' large collection of volumes and scrapbooks relating to Olympia and Washington history.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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